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ABSTRACT

The study reported in this paper identified and interviewed a representative sample of the former Doukhobor residents of 13 Canadian villages and compared responses of three generations of Doukhobors regarding the nature and strength of their present identity. The results of the survey are summarized in 5 idea components: Awareness of Culture; Language, Religion and Belief System; Education and Schooling; Threat of Assimilation; and Confronting Issues, Discrimination, etc. A brief discussion of Doukhobor beliefs and history help provide a background to the field work and analysis described. References and two appendixes are included; the appendices consist of an outline of interview responses charted by age group and the interview questionnaire. (TRS)

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DOUKHOBORS IN ALBERTA: A PEOPLE IN TRANSITION

A Paper presented to the Seventh Biennial Conference of

The Canadian Ethnic Studies Association

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A reform movement in eighteenth century Russia spawned many religious sects whose leaders had become disillusioned with aspects of the state church and sought to develop alternative belief systems. Several of these groups later migrated to North America, one of them being the Doukhobors whose belief in pacifism and communal living generated more than a little interest. In Russia on June 29, 1895, they demonstrated their final distaste for militarism by piling their arms onto a bonfire and watching them go up in smoke. This action was not approved by the Russian government who sent troops to break up the spectacle, but failed to quash the belief system. It was typical of the group's activities; earlier, in 1785, a Russian state church leader, Archbishop Ambrosius, had branded the Doukhobors as "Doukhobortski" (Spirit Wrestlers) because of their radical actions, a term which the Doukhobors interpreted to mean wrestling in the Spirit, not against it. A novel by Hugh Grieg, The Hope and the Promise,[1] graphically portrays the events that led to the drama of the "burning of arms" and outlines the developments that led to the Doukhobor exodus to North America.

It has been 86 years since the arrival of the Doukhobors in Canada, long enough for the assimilative processes of dominant society to chip away at their lifestyle and identity. Although most Orthodox Doukhobors would consider the interior of British Columbia to be the geographical mainstay of their identity today, at one time, starting in 1915, thirteen of their villages functioned in the southern part of Alberta. A breakaway group later also developed at Shouldice. Most of the descendants of these villages have since left the area and

settled in various locations in both provinces. The objective of this study was to identify and interview a representative sample of the former residents of these villages and to compare responses of three generations of Doukhobors regarding the nature and strength of their identity today. The results of this survey are summarized in this paper.

Forty-five people participated in the survey and the following age groups were categorized: 18 to 29 years of age, 30 to 59, and those over sixty. The geographic area concentrated on included Lundbreck-Cowley, Mossleigh-Shouldice and the City of Calgary. About half of the interviews were conducted by the researcher and the remainder by Mike Verigin, secretary of the United Doukhobors of Alberta.

The Doukhobor population in the Cowley area today is limited (less than fifty) because many of the former residents have relocated to the B.C. interior to be nearer the heartbeat of their faith leaving only a few resident families. They gather on occasion for prayer at the local community home, usually only a few times a year, and are the only such group to meet regularly in Alberta. Several families live in the Mossleigh-Shouldice area and are engaged in farming.

A brief discussion of Doukhobor beliefs and history may provide helpful background to the field work later described.

DOUKHOBOR DISTINCTIVES

A logical extention of the Doukhobor belief in pacifism is vegetarianism, and although this practice was not originally a part of the Doukhobor philosophy, today many Orthodox believers religiously adhere to it on grounds that all animal life is sacred. Equally

important in ideology is their preference for communal living, even though they only practice it in limited forms today, i.e., co-op stores, credit union and volunteer group work in the peace movement.

Originally, the Doukhobors were given permission to settle in Tauria - Milky Waters - near the Sea of Azon (in Russia), where they established nine large villages and lived communally from 1802 to 1845. After that their exile to the Caucasus began where they also lived in villages, but farmed their own private plots. Hay and pasture lands were held in common by each village. In 1865, the communal way of life was revived and the next twenty-two years became known as "the prosperous period" or "Golden Age" under Lukeria Kalmakova's leadership.

The leadership question among Doukhobors has always raised the eyebrows of outsiders, particularly because of the reverence that is accorded their most popular Canadian leader, Peter Vasilievich Verigin (Peter the Lordly). Peter had been personally groomed for his work by Lukeria Vasilievna Kalmakova while a young man in Russia. She even had his marriage annulled on the grounds that he should devote his total energies to his work, and when the Doukhobors settled in eastern Saskatchewan in 1899 (about 7,427 souls) they sent for Peter Verigin to be their leader. Verigin had been chosen to be Lukeria's successor at the six week memorial service held after her death on January 26, 1887. He was at once sentenced to exile for fifteen years by Russian authorities and returned to his followers in Canada on December 24, 1902. Soon after his arrival a splintering was formalized that spawned two additional groups, namely the Independents and the more radical Sons of Freedom, although the seeds for

this development had been planted soon after the Doukhobor arrival in Canada. The former acquiesced to government pressure to register their land individually when the Orthodox under Verigin's leadership refused to do so, and the Sons of Freedom sought to embarrass the government for their blatant violation of Doukhobor rights and freedoms. Even today the leadership issue is a complex and thorny subject among members of all three factions.

The insistence of the federal government to register Doukhobor lands individually to comply with the requirements of the Homestead Act was seen by some as a deliberate means to interfere with the 61 Doukhobor villages on the prairies. These were located in the Kamsack, Blaine Lake-Langham, Swan River-Pelly, and Buchanan-Canora areas. Not willing to give into this requirement and thus forfeit many hundreds of acres of soil broken by the new arrivals, Verigin arranged in 1908 to buy 2,800 acres of land in the Kootenay district of British Columbia which grew to include 21,600 acres by 1922. In the meantime, in 1915, a series of thirteen villages was developed at Cowley, Alberta because the distance was shorter for moving belongings and relocating people from Saskatchewan.

Peter Verigin was killed in 1924 in an explosion that rocked the train on which he was riding and after the appropriate six week period of mourning, the people elected to send for his son, Peter Petrovich, who was still in Russia. It was several years before he arrived and in the meantime Peter the Lordly's companion, Anastasia Golubova, attracted a number of followers and in 1926 developed a commune at Shouldice, near Arrowood, Alberta, about sixty miles east and south of Calgary. This experiment drew 165 people at its peak and lasted

about nineteen years. Her followers gradually abandoned her and she was finally left with a single servant until her death on November 24, 1965.

The official organization of Orthodox Doukhobors, the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood, was declared financially bankrupt in 1938 although there is some indication that this situation could have been delayed except for the eagerness of the provincial government of British Columbia to put an end to the community and the hasty actions of the Sun Life and National Trust Insurance Companies. The sequence of events was as follows: in 1929, local banks sold Doukhobor mortgages to the Sun Life and National Trust Companies who attempted an immediate foreclosure. Failing this, they applied the court action of the B.C. Supreme Court which in 1938 announced that the Farmers' Land Protection Act did not apply to a corporation and foreclosure would be allowed. By 1940 the B.C. government passed the Doukhobor Lands Acquisition Act and took title to Doukhobor lands. The government paid a total of $296,500 for these lands which were actually worth about twelve million dollars, and administered them for sale to former occupants through their Land Settlement Board. In Alberta and Saskatchewan the land was sold directly to former members of the community thus establishing a new set of Independents.[2] Many Doukhobors are still bitter about the way in which their villages were divided and claim that the debt load of the community could easily have been handled if the companies holding the mortgages had been a little more understanding.

A fundamental Doukhobor belief is that each person, man, woman or child, possesses an element within called a "Divine Spark"

which enables that individual to be in communion with God and to receive direct messages for behavior. As a result, although Christian in origin, Doukhobors have rejected the written word on the Biblical grounds that "The letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life." The same thinking applies to their maintenance of records, recording of history and perpetuation of religious writings. In every sense, theirs is an oral tradition.

CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS

As one moves across the prairies to locate Doukhobor centres there is still much evidence of their past lifestyle. There are some ruins of Doukhobor villages in the Kamsack-Verigin area, but the National Doukhobor Heritage Village in Verigin is a "must" stop for any one interested in their history. A number of Doukhobor "community" homes, small unpretentious buildings where small numbers of the faithful gather weekly to pray, may be found in such towns as Kamsack, Canora, Saskatoon and Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan and in Lundbreck, Alberta. Two such buildings which stand unoccupied are at Shouldice and south of Mossleigh in Alberta. Doukhobor community homes are sometimes considered to be prayer homes by outsiders, but rarely by their adherents. Doukhobors in wholesale fashion rejected the church institution, including a special building for that purpose, a designated minister, and the Bible. Those Doukhobors who do use the prayer home label are sometimes accused of forgetting their roots.

Other landmarks include a hotel in Grand Forks, B.C. which serves Russian-Doukhobor style food as does the Doukhobor Museum Restaurant on the highway just outside of Castlegar, and the

surrounding geographic area is dotted with buildings reminiscent of a bygone era. Both Grand Forks and Castlegar have large meeting places for Doukhobor gatherings, the most significant of which is "Declaration Day" on August 1st. A youth festival is celebrated on the May 24th long weekend, but "Peter's Day", which is June 29th, no longer draws the large crowds it used to. The latter celebration is still quite popular in Saskatchewan.

The contemporary organization intended to bring Doukhobors together is the Union of Spiritual Communities in Christ, even though the struggle to retain members is very difficult. Of some 25,000 people of Doukhobor background in Canada today, only about 1,500 are paid-up members, although the supporting community may include as many as 5,000 persons. A headquarters for the organization is at Grand Forks with John J. Verigin, a grandson of the second Peter Verigin, serving as its honorary chairman. John's father was John S. Voikin who died when his son was only a baby. The child was raised by his maternal grandparents, the Verigins, who took him to Canada in 1928 and formally adopted him. A publication, ISKRA (The Spark) is published several times during the year in both Russian and English and represents one of many attempts to restore the fading identity of the Doukhobors. A Russian school has been functioning in Castlegar for several years, a Sunday School program has been developed at Grand Forks, and a youth committee has been established to ascertain ways to develop awareness of Doukhobor distinctives among the new generations. All are efforts intended to serve the same purpose of cultural maintenance.

Factionalizing among Doukhobors is an established tradition basically because of the principle of the individuality of the Divine Spark. Although it is generally recognized that there are three main factions, recent developments may identify as many as eight groups, most of them resident in the Castlegar-Grand Forks area. The leadership of John Verigin may be a related item because some of the Orthodox do not attribute him the same respect as they did his predecessors, partially, perhaps, because of his insistence to claim only an honorary title.

A COMPARISON OF VIEWPOINTS

The difficulties of seeking to accumulate information on the Doukhobor story are many, principal among them being the lack of an established written tradition, suspicion of available published sources, and a particularly strong penchant for individuality.[3] This makes the interviewing of Doukhobor adherents a valued source of information, particularly when sufficient time is spent in the search. Initially, rapport must be established which is usually followed by the sharing of valuable insights about a most interesting chapter in Canadian history.

The young people are the least inhibited of the three groups interviewed, perhaps because of their considerable familiarity with the process. As the discussion of the interview results will show, the transition from traditional Doukhobor culture to the Canadian mainstay is virtually completed among members of the younger set.

A theoretical background for this discussion originates in the work of Milton M. Gordon who concocted a set of criteria by which to

identify assimilation relying on sociological contributions dating from the work of Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess at the University of Chicago in 1921.[4] Milton suggests seven basic subprocesses in the procedure, each of which may be thought of as constituting a particular stage or aspect of assimilation. Thus we may say that members of a particular ethnic group have lost their identity and become assimilated when they have:

1. changed their cultural patterns (including religious beliefs and observances) to that of dominant society (cultural or behavioral assimilation);

2. taken on large scale primary group relationships within dominant society, i.e. have entered into the societal network of groups and institutions, or societal structure of dominant society (structural assimilation);

3. intermarried and interbred fully with members of dominant society (marital assimilation);

4. develop a national, rather than a minority sense of peoplehood or ethnicity (identificational assimilation);

5. reached a point where they encounter no discriminatory behavior (attitude receptional assimilation);

6. reached a point where they encounter no prejudiced attitudes (behavioral receptional assimilation); and

7. reached a point where they do not raise by their demands concerning the nature of their minority status or identity, any public or civic issues involving value and power conflict with the original members of their particular group (civic assimilation).[5]

Against this background it was decided to adopt the approach of interviewing representative members of the Alberta Doukhobor community in depth, using a referral system to identify additional participants. The method worked well, and the results are reported in summary fashion rather than attempting to apply statistical methodologies. The presentation of responses will be enriched by quotations from participants as a means of letting them tell their own story. A copy of the interview schedule is included at the back of this paper (see Appendix B).

Easily the most delightful part of researching Doukhobor traditions is to reminisce with elders about "the olden days", enjoying with them their retelling of hard times and good times and at the same time trying to appreciate their reluctance to become a part of the contemporary cultural scene. In this project, there were clear lines of distinction to be noted among the various world-views of the three generations contacted and each deserves separate treatment.

The Older Generation

It has been suggested that Doukhobor hospitality is second to none and if the Doukhobor expression for such a situation is any indication, the observation is an understatement. "You'll eat with us, of course," is a frequently offered welcome and the time of day for issuing such an invitation is largely irrelevant. The hour may indicate that the guest might have dined just before arrival, but that fact will make little difference to the hostess. Borscht, fresh vegetables and fruit will be served, along with a few Russian specialities like potato bread or fruit dumplings. If the meal is eaten at the table, the hostess will remain standing at one end until the guest(s) have eaten

their fill, keeping serving bowls well stocked. Afterwards, she will be seated to eat leftovers alone.

Contacting the older members of the Doukhobor community is relatively uncomplicated since their network of acquaintances across the western provinces is very much intact. This network includes virtually every Doukhobor locality and once an outsider is initiated into it he will find it a fairly simple matter to enlarge his circle of acquaintances. It is helpful to have a working knowledge of the community before embarking on research in order to avoid making statements that might offend people or show a lack of respect for the various traditions. It is quite possible to drop the "wrong names" on some occasions as well and only a fuller awareness of the inner workings of the community will help the researcher to avoid that. Although not a privilege readily available to many researchers, it helps to have a background that is akin to that of the Doukhobors because it can greatly aid in breaking the ice, e.g. being a Mennonite; that pacifist group also lived in the Milky Waters in Russia for a time and were neighbors of the Doukhobors there.

The older generation of Doukhobors is very conscious of limitations in the English language and often comment that they are not the best informants on Doukhobor living because "I can only say what I know." That statement is intended to convey that they would rather have someone else to do the talking for the community, perhaps a throwback to the days when someone else did the talking on behalf of the people, namely the revered leaders. Once the ice is broken and trust has been established, the conversation rolls along quite nicely.

The threat of assimilation to the Doukhobors, like that of many other immigrant groups is, as George Woodcock says, probably inevitable.[6] Thus the politics that evolve in seeking to preserve that identity from certain threatening forces appear to intensify as the threat increasingly becomes a reality. This phenomenon is not unique to Doukhobors, of course, although their philosophical format seems to lend itself more readily toward secrecy and internal politics. One interviewee in British Columbia showed me a part of his house that had been bombed about ten years ago after he had apparently made statements at a public gathering of Doukhobors to the extent that he suspected certain leadership elements to be promoting too strong a tie with Russia. He still attends forums and still speaks out, but his experience is a reminder that reactions to political statements among Doukhobors may be taken just a bit more seriously than among other minorities in Canada.

Most of the older generation of Doukhobors presently live with happy memories of the olden days with a bittersweet lament for future generations. Most reveal some disappointment in seeing their children intermarry with other groups, although admitting that marrying outside the faith might actually be a logical choice from the young person's perspective. They express some regret in having failed to teach their children and grandchildren the Russian language, and some mournfully long for the happy days of the communal way of life. At a large meeting of Doukhobors in Castlegar a few years ago, the audience was asked where they stood on the question of communal living and a large majority of Orthodox people raised their hands in favor. However, the reanimation of such a format seems fairly remote at the present time.

The major components of the elder Doukhobor responses can be summarized in five general ideas.

1. Awareness of Culture: Cultural Persistence. A majority of Doukhobors of this generation agreed that their way of life is still very much alive, possibly thinking only in terms of the configuration of their own generation. The nature of their remaining culture is sometimes labelled differently, e.g. Russian or Doukhobor culture, but it includes a strong religious emphasis, festivals and celebrations, music and clothing styles, and the beliefs of pacifism and vegetarianism. "Yes, our culture exists," offered one respondent, "and I would say quite favorable. I would say the language definitely, but also our beliefs and form of worship. Other items are wedding ceremonies, funeral rites, etc."

Observations regarding the communal versus independent forms of living brought forth an interesting array of comments including, "We cannot love our brothers if we do not live under the communal way of life," and, "We now have the spiritual community left and that is what we adhere to. We gather to do spiritual things; that is what is left of the communal way!"

Doukhobors sometimes lament that the theme of peace is currently much banded about in society but void of any theological implications. For example, "Today you listen to the elections and the various leaders are also for peace." The popularity of the concept has rendered some uneasiness among the Doukhobors. On the other hand, anyone who endorses the traditional Doukhobor concept of peace can, in theory, be considered one of that number. "It doesn't need a person to be Russian, especially if he's born a Doukhobor . . . a

Frenchman, an Englishman or Chinese could be a Doukhobor; all those who can understand the purpose of life and who can understand the real meaning of life and the spirit to fight not with guns and swords but with our minds." In this sense, modern Doukhoborism is seen as a potentially universal philosophy, not an ethnic culture.

2. Language, Religion and Belief System. Older Doukhobors strongly believe that everyone in their number should master the English language in order to be able to function in today's society. Ideally, they should learn and retain both Russian and English. Several respondents felt that it would be hard to become facile in English and maintain the Doukhobor way of life; others felt that Russian should be learned for its own benefit, even by outsiders - for the insights that the language could provide.

Although almost entirely void of religious festivals and rituals, the Doukhobor prayer meeting, which is really their major ritual, is still a very special occasion. As one respondent described it:

> We enter the community home where others are already gathered. The men are standing on the right and the women on the left side. We greet the congregation with the words, "Glory to the Lord," and bow. The congregation responds with, "Praise, we praise and thank God for His Grace," and they also bow. Then they say, "Christ is risen." We then taken our place with the brothers and sisters. In the front of the gathering, the prayer home gathering, are the Doukhobor symbols - the bread, salt and water. Prayers are said at the beginning with the men and those that wish may then walk to the front of the gathering and stand in front of the bread, salt and water and say prayers. When the men are finished, the women take their turn. After the prayers have been recited, they begin by singing the Lord's Prayer which is usually followed by two more prayers that are sung. Then there are the hymns. During all this time the women remain standing. After everyone is seated, the

discussions follow pertaining to religious matters and spiritual matters.

For the older generation, the memory and importance of their once strong belief system predominates reality. Although they do not have formal leaders locally designated to uphold these teachings by precept or example, there are a handful of people who, by virtue of their adherence to the teachings, kind of "appear" in times of need, e.g. to assist with a funeral. Their role emerges because they know the prayers and psalms and the people simply gravitate toward them at such times. Funerals are primary in this regard, but the occasional wedding also reveals aspects of the traditional way.

3. Education and Schooling. As will later be shown, the younger set of Doukhobors are not as optimistic about culture retention as their grandparents are. "Yes, our children are eager to learn the old ways," said one respondent, and others echoed the claim with more modest appraisals. It was suggested that the primary responsibility for this action currently rests with parents in the absence of Russian schools, and a proper achievement in the Doukhobor way need not be hindered by absorption of modern education. "It's like adding a sixth finger to your hand . . . The more a person learns what he is himself, the reality of life, the better it is for him and the better to portray our philosophy."

Russian schools are probably only a fantasy in the minds of the older generation, but at least half of the respondents indicated a desire for their return. They acknowledged the necessity of formal education in today's world, but lamented its vocational orientation. "Today, schools are mostly run not for the good of humanity, but for the good of individual human beings so they can have clean hands all

the time instead of going and working with the shovel." Still, the objective of schooling should be to prepare the youth to live in both worlds; he should, however, be a Doukhobor first!

Recognizing the increase of Doukhobor youth attendance at the nation's institutions of higher education, their elders were encouraged by the efforts of the universities to promote Doukhobor history and the Russian language. Some were quite eloquent in terms of what they perceived the role of the university to be:

> At the present time in Lethbridge there is a Native course with Native professors, teachers and Native students, and there are also non-Native students enrolled. They offer language, Indian history and even Indian religion. Do you believe that this would be a good idea if this was also done for the Doukhobors?

Clearly, the older Doukhobor people are aware of a variety of beckoning possibilities for the maintenance of their way of life.

4. <u>The Threat of Assimilation</u>. The question of reciprocity insofar as the exchange of cultural values and practices are concerned was assessed with disdain on the part of most respondents. In terms of Doukhobors adopting Canadian characteristics, one person put it this way: "With what's going on in society or the world today, I wouldn't want to adopt anything of that way of life." Most, however, were more generous and suggested that the whole Canadian way of life is good - minus the violent qualities. They were much more optimistic regarding the adoption of Doukhobor values by Canadians, and suggested that pretty well all such positive distinctives should be taken on - spiritual values, vegetarianism, brotherly love, emphasis on the simple life, etc. Perhaps it would be natural to expect this kind of

desire on the part of any ethnocultural group members who have some pride in their heritage.

The question as to the length of time it might take for full assimilation of Doukhobor people was often greeted with the response, "I think there will always be Doukhobors. It's just like a little stream of water or a little spring that comes from under the ground, and it does not matter that you tramp that spring down, cement it or tramp on it, the water will break out in a different place and you can get a cold, clean drink of water." In terms of a tenacity of belief, the statement, "I think there will always be Doukhobors, the idea can never be lost," is significant, but perhaps more as an expression of a dream than reality.

A central concern of the older generation is the retention of their way of life by the younger set. "Our biggest problem is retaining the children in the belief system. As you know, there is television and different shows that make it very hard to compete with, and to put our system across thoroughly." Still, the inevitability of assimilation looms ominously on the immediate horizon, and the longing that "there will always be Doukhobors even though they may alter their culture in some ways" is challenged by the gradual but pronounced emergence of a national Canadian identity.

5. Confronting Issues: Discrimination, etc. The older Orthodox Doukhobors appear to be somewhat reluctant to admit to the practice of discrimination against them, although they do stress that this was not always the case a number of years back. What transpires today is really a more subtle sort, i.e. like being confused with less desirable groups like the Sons of Freedom. Some Canadians who do

not understand the Doukhobor peace stand appear to disrespect their seriousness with the concept, but for the most part Canada has shown itself to be a good place to live.

On the question as to Doukhobor discrimination against outsiders, the Orthodox answer by pointing out that they are not perfect. "We are not really discriminatory, perhaps a little prejudiced toward the idea that our youth marry fellow Doukhobors." In the event that a Doukhobor does marry an outsider, the elders will go out of their way to make that individual welcome in the family circle. It would accomplish nothing to bypass the traditional practice of exercising hospitality and brotherly love to everyone, particularly new members of one's family.

The main challenge for Doukhobors in Alberta, according to the older generation, is not cultural preservation per se, but rather the practicalities of fulfilling that responsibility among their own children. If the elders are correct in their wistfulness that there will always be a Doukhobor identity, it remains doubtful that the world will always recognize that identity as one that matches their concept of authenticity. Only the hope has that element.

> I don't think it can ever be lost, because the more that a human being learns, the more he rises to the good understanding of life and the easier it will be for him to grasp all that the Doukhobors have held for over three hundred years. They haven't lost it in the times of the Czar when they had persecution. There is no other way but to hold to this fastly.

There are a number of signs that the assimilation process has made inroads among older Doukhobors, particularly in terms of structural assimilation, even though they long for the return of communal living. Most live in Doukhobor settlements where they can freely

engage in the use of the Russian language with their neighbors. They avoid urban living where possible except in cases when it is convenient to be closer to their families. For the most part they feel accepted by Canadian society (attitudinal and behavioral receptional assimilation), and are willing to accept intermarriages (marital assimilation). In a real sense their orientation is portrayed by the closing words of a French Canadian in Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan as he is portrayed on a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation release, Bonjour: Goodby, "If I am to be assimilated, I will be assimilated standing up, not sitting down."

The Middle Group

A decidely different orientation than that outlined above is evident among Alberta Doukhobors aged 30 to 59, particularly with regard to having few nostalgic reminiscences of bygone days. This is the "involved" generation in the sense of their being occupied with raising children, promoting community activities, and making a living. With their agrarian roots pretty well tucked away in the past, only vestiges of old values persist -- pacifism, simple living and vegetarianism. Even the language has virtually been lost through intermarriage or assimilation. Obviously success in business implies a facility in English and this generation has rapidly made the transition. Also, their children learn English in school, and they want to converse with their parents in that language. In short, the spirit or Geist of the original Doukhobor experience and its religious/cultural counterparts is on the wane.

A frequent expression among Doukhobors of this age group in Alberta is, "You should go to B.C. if you want to learn about our way

of life. That's where our people live." A visit to the localities of Grand Forks or Castlegar will not necessarily substantiate that hope, however, despite the most anxious of wishes. Sunday celebrations or prayer times usually bring out only twenty people or so, usually members of the older generation. This number has not increased in twenty years. Attempts to revive older established customs are stymied by a lack of appeal to younger members and the difficulty of initiating newer forms of old traditions is a tough challenge. A committee charged with seeking to develop such forms has toyed with the idea of establishing a limited communal experiment on land still held by the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ. The nature and potential membership of such an endeavor has not been developed, however; neither have the objectives for such an undertaking been clarified. Framers of the idea are hesitant to engage in a project that might be construed as an attempt to revive the ghosts of the past.

Generally speaking, the middle group has little fear of assimilating into the Canadian mainstream via employment, losing the Russian language or through schooling. They believe that some of the traditional Doukhobor distinctives can be maintained regardless of the occupation one chooses, or which aspects of the Canadian lifestyle one adopts, but they are at a loss to know how this might be properly executed. This group manifests a respect for the old traditions but that reverence does not easily translate into parallel contemporary practices of any sort. They are cordial to university research, encourage their children to attend institutions of higher learning, and appear quite happy about the fact that members of the university community would involve themselves in the teaching of the Russian

language or Doukhobor history and tradition. As one respondent put it, "They should teach about our way of life in the same way that they teach about any other minority group in Canada." This group also manifests a more realistic approach to assimilation and is fairly attuned to the reality that when the older generation passes on, the intrinsic worth and practice of Doukhobor traditions will die with them. There appears to be little concern about assimilation in Alberta with a few exceptions, and the attitude reflects a hard-headed realism rather than an emotional attachment to the past. Where the group has been willing to integrate into the mainstream (as have the majority of those interviewed), they have readily adopted English as their first language and preserved Russian mainly to be able to converse with their parents. Only a few young Doukhobors in Alberta today under the age of thirty speak Russian.

1. Awareness of Culture: Cultural Persistence. A somewhat mixed concept of Doukhobor culture is evident from opinions shared by the middle age group, with their responses identifying a wide range of characteristics, i.e. from religious rituals and practices, vegetarianism and language to admission that only minimal adherence is evident today. As one respondent put it, "I think now there exists a minimal sort of culture but I'm afraid the chief existence seems to deal with funerals as the older people pass away . . . I was a little kid the last time I went to a Doukhobor funeral." Another admitted, "I think the culture is slipping away. We had the beliefs, but the meaning is no longer valid." These views auger well with the strong preference for an independent lifestyle, even though the claim is made that Doukhobors do not stick their heads in the sand in terms of world

awareness. ". . . we live in the global village and whichever way you do it, you have to realize that you live as a citizen of the world. . ." Perhaps this rationale is simultaneously a justification for the extent of assimilation among the group.

Doukhobors are generally quite proud of their independence aside from the economic considerations of traditional communalism, in fact, some like to think of themselves as "the most individualistic people in the world because we each have our own interpretation of things. Yet we are all one unit." Evidently, the concept of the Divine spark has not yet been relegated to the attic of past beliefs. The difficulty seems to be in finding a balance between complete independence and yet having some appreciation for or loyalty to the belief of communalism.

2. Language, Religion and Belief System. Doukhobors of this age group are united in the opinion that members of their community should retain both the Russian language and learn English as well. They are much less adamant than their older counterparts in making claims about the value of the Russian language, mainly arguing that languages per se should generally be protected from extinction.

One respondent suggested that the nature of the Doukhobor faith is more nearly akin to that of a philosophy than a cultural phenomenon, because it is essentially a "rationale, simplistic way of living", as opposed to religion which features a variety of ritualistic and symbolic practices. It is quite possible that a shallow ritualism may well have made inroads into the Doukhobor configuration with the practice of funerals, for example, simply because many of the members of the community who attend these may have little understanding of

the underlying purposes for the various procedures. The concept of pacifism, however, is probably better understood and appreciated, and if it is not valued by the middle group as a day-to-day philosophy, it is certainly high on the list of revered values.

3. Education and Schooling. There is some ambivalence among members of this group insofar as the success of cultural transmission is concerned, and most respondents felt that the fundamentals of the Doukhobor faith and culture were not being satisfactorily passed on. There was also some uncertainty as to how this situation could be improved and who should undertake such reform. Evidently, no one wanted to make recommendations for such an undertaking.

The middle group felt strongly that schooling should be public and their children should plan to get as much training as possible. The objective of such a course would be to enable the youth to function in both worlds, dominant society and the fading Doukhobor community. The latter admission was offered somewhat reluctantly, but void of any strongly voiced claim to make up the apparent deficiency.

The role of higher education is acclaimed among middle group members both in terms of furnishing opportunities for their youth as well as being charged with the responsibility of promoting research on the Doukhobor community. Teaching courses on Doukhobor history and traditions was seen as a normal duty of the university, whose officers should also consider incorporating aspects of the non-violence position in other ongoings. It was also suggested that a western Canadian university establish a chair in Doukhobor studies to supplement the minimal operations of the Institute of Doukhobor Studies at Selkirk College in Castlegar.

4. The Threat of Assimilation. What aspects of Canadian society should Doukhobors accept? This question was approached somewhat philosophically, and one respondent suggested that there was little choice in matter since most Canadian values and practices are absorbed unconsciously, and there is little respite from the flow. "I can't seem to focus on anything that we have not adopted that isn't against the teaching of Christ," one respondent remarked. "I think that's the only criterion for rejection."

Respondents were more pointed in their desire to see certain Doukhobor beliefs inculcated by Canadians, however, suggesting that society at large would do well to incorporate the spirit of the slogan, "Toil and peaceful life". "My top choice would be for the non-violent ways . . . and I'd extend it to showing love . . . and being more neighborly," one respondent offered, and another added, "You take the best of what there is that they offer and incorporate it into your own lifestyle. So you ignore the bigotry and prejudice and just accept those attitudes that are positive."

The process of assimilation is well underway, according to the middle group, with the range of opinions including the suggestion that assimilation may already be complete to the rejection of the mere suggestion. "If I interpret integration as assimilation, I don't think "they" will ever be assimilated," was stated somewhat adamantly, although the use of the second person pronoun does appear in the response. The respondent then went on to say:

> Mind you, I must admit that some of them have been assimilated - that is, they changed their names, changed their religion, and go to some other church, but the average Doukhobor is not going to be assimilated into the mainstream of any way of life be it Canadian or any other

> country. He's going to maintain his religion and his philosophy of non-violence as long as there are Doukhobors.

The conviction of gradually losing grip on a valued possession came through in the interviews with the middle age group, conveying a sense of loss without really knowing how to stop the inevitable process. It was described this way: "It is very hard to preserve the culture right now, and what is left tends to be more of a frivolous culture whether its singing or concerts or say, an annual festival we're having." Some commented wistfully that the younger generation showed signs of picking up the tempo of their Doukhobor beliefs, but the hurt of reality showed through in one remark, made by a person who has left Alberta: "If they wanted to preserve the culture they should have moved to the interior of British Columbia."

5. Confronting Issues, Discrimination, etc. Are Doukhobors discriminated against in Canadian society today? The answer was basically negative, with most respondents admitting that this was not always the case. Reversing the question, that is, identifying possible Doukhobor discrimination of others, produced a more hesitant set of answers. "I think its an unfortunate part of the culture, partly through our history and partly, maybe, because we're clannish." Also, "Well, let's face it, I mean, if you're a Catholic, wouldn't you want your child to marry a Catholic? And its the same with Doukhobor people." And finally, "I think they would be to non-Doukhobors who go hunting or shooting animals because it's against their belief." Obviously, the context of the situation would affect the nature of any discriminative act with the exception of the practice of endogamy. That practice, by the way, tends to be a fairly

good example of a surviving cultural universal among ethnocultural groups.

The stages of assimilation not yet completed by the middle group are basically attitudinal. They simply do not wish to let go of their Doukhobor identity, but with the exception of the concepts of pacifism and non-violence, they have essentially endorsed the Canadian way of life. Like anyone with an appreciation for history, they value past cultural experiences for their children but find themselves helpless to define a functional course of action for cultural preservation. Perhaps Gordon is correct when he says that "Once structural assimilation has occurred, either simultaneously with or subsequent to acculturation, all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow."[7]

The Younger Set

If present trends continue, the next generation of Doukhobor Canadians will know little of their Russian heritage. The fact is that cultural retention among Doukhobors of Alberta has been relatively ineffective among the under-thirty group and may basically be summed up as a series of ritualistic celebrations including funerals, St. Peter's Day commemorations and the occasional picnic. Most of the youth interviewed manifested little enthusiasm for these occasions, even though most testified to a uniquely Doukhobor aura in connection with burial of the dead. Funerals, in fact, have always been a very special community event among the Doukhobors and they initially even rejected the idea of registering such events with Canadian authorities. Their grounds for doing so had to do with the avoidance of all

state-oriented acts, one of the ground reasons for their originally leaving Russia.

Many older Doukhobors can describe in detail what happened at the early Doukhobor funerals, only a shadow of which is left today. Like many prairie settlers, their method of burying the dead was quite crude by today's standards. Among Doukhobors, funerals were sometimes held in the dining room of the house with family members and friends looking after the embalming procedures. Most funerals were among older people whose best clothing may already have been laid out in preparation for the event of anticipation of their death. The coffins were hand-made of lumber and carefully lined with cloth. Sometimes friends also made silk flowers to decorate them. The event lasted three days and included a wake, with family members and friends watching the casket on a continual basis. On the last day, the funeral was carried out with much singing and with prayer and ended with a final meal prepared by the family and served by the relatives.

Doukhobors believe that funerals should feature a sharing of the loss and thus funerals are a community event. Essentially the commemoration or mourning period lasted six weeks, particularly in the case of the death of a leader. Individuals who lose a loved one are urged to be in close attendance at the event so that they may experience the reality of the loss. This will later help them to adjust to the vacancy created and reorient them to getting on with life alone. Witnessing the end also enables an individual to appreciate the reality of the Spirit world. They can experience the passing over to another sphere. It is also customary when cemeteries are later visited that

prayers are said both on arriving and leaving to acknowledge the presence of those who rest there. It is believed that this contact is both meaningful and real, psychological as well as spiritual. Small wonder that even those youth who are removed from the mainstream of Orthodox Doukhobors still experience the impact of the religion when they attend or think about funerals.

1. Awareness of Culture: Cultural Persistence. Although the traditional Doukhobor way of life has always been highlighted by their ardent pacifism (which also translated into vegetarianism, simplicity of religious forms, a rejection of materialism, and communal living), none of these characteristics are indelibly stamped into the minds of today's generation. They believe that to live independently is best for Doukhobors, being fully integrated into the Canadian way of life. Even agriculture and gardening, once the mainstay of the Orthodox people, is not envisaged as having any special implications for the new generation. They speak of peace and neighborliness as objectives once admired by their grandparents, but which have little relevance for urban living. Many answers employ the pronoun "they" when speaking of the Doukhobor way of life - something quite alien to their own configuration.

2. Language, Religion and Belief System. Canadians who are even mildly acquainted with Doukhobor ways know of their constant quest for peace and their denial of things military. While the younger generation is aware of this belief and tends to acknowledge it at least verbally, they insist that Doukhobors should live as other Canadians do. The openness they express toward other Canadians, they believe, is a vital factor in maintaining good relationships with their neighbors.

This acceptance of others undoubtedly bespeaks the pronounced assimilation which is already well underway.

Recollections of specific Doukhobor beliefs are very vague among Alberta Doukhobor youth with only one mention each of such aspects as vegetarianism, belief in God, celebrations, and the use of bread, salt and water as symbols of their philosophy; most of the responses were akin to, "I remember very little," without offering further specificity.

The concept of language as a carrier of culture and belief finds no support among Doukhobor youth. While all are agreed that the language should be preserved, that plea is consistently accompanied by the corollary observation that this is the same arrangement as there should be for any other language. They do not distinguish between Russian and other languages in any way that might indicate a bias toward their "mother-tongue" for cultural reasons. Any language is worth preserving in a cultural mosaic, regardless of its origins or nature.

3. Education and Schooling. The extent to which Doukhobor culture is passed on is largely dependent upon the relationship of grandparents to their grandchildren. As it is, very little of this kind of activity transpires, particularly in cases of intermarriage with other Canadians. The gradual increase of schooling among Doukhobors has also mitigated against the retention of Doukhobor values since the content absorbed there rarely offers edifying portrayals of the Doukhobor way of life. Yet today's Doukhobor youth maintain that education is important so that they might be able to find an appropriate place in Canadian society. The amount of education should be an

individual choice, was the response, and Doukhobor youth should have the same educational opportunities as any other Canadian. Public schooling was the form of schooling endorsed by all respondents even though they clearly expressed an appreciation for the concept of being able to function in both worlds as an objective for themselves. If Russian is to be maintained simply as another Canadian language, and the culture is only minimally passed on to succeeding generations by older folk, what are the "two worlds" in which the new generation of Doukhobors are to function? Clearly, the shift in changing cultural patterns identified by Gordon has taken place. Large scale relationships with members of the dominant society appear to have taken priority over assemblies with one's cultural peers, and the societal network of operation is comprised entirely of fellow Canadians with no links to the minority world of the Doukhobor.[8]

Like other Canadians, Doukhobor youth are utilizing the services of higher learning to an increasing extent, evidently for the purposes of enhancing their vocational opportunities. Additional roles for the university are not clearly envisaged, even though it was suggested that research efforts oriented to assisting in the maintenance of cultural identity might be undertaken. Several respondents expressed an opinion that paralleled their concept of language in that they felt that the university should teach ethnic history and cultural heritage in the same manner as might be the case with regard to other minority groups. This perspective hardly manifests a particular concern about personal background, undoubtedly because the ethos of that background has not been inculcated.

4. The Threat of Assimilation. Clearly the toughest challenge for Doukhobor people today is the maintenance of valued beliefs and customs. Doukhobor youth reveal no deep regret about this challenge, but still consider that some kind of cultural exchange should be made between the two communities. They suggest that the Canadian way of life should be fully endorsed by themselves, with a little reluctance about endorsing war, and Canadian generally would benefit if they sought to capture the Doukhobor vision of hospitality and brotherly love. In other ways, however, the process of assimilation is well underway. The actual completion of the process of assimilation, according to Doukhobor youth, will be completed in this generation or has already taken place. If the shadowing images of the Doukhobor way of life which these youth harbour in their minds are any indication, the process is probably in its final stages.

5. Confronting Issues, Discrimination etc. Gordon suggests that the final stages of assimilation reveal the lack of discriminatory behavior against a particular group, and the younger generation testified that very little if any of this is encountered. When it does occur it is merely in the occurrence of meeting someone who knows few facts about Doukhobors and perhaps describes their lifestyle in a negative fashion. It is quite common for public images of Doukhobors to play to the more dramatic side of their history, particularly to portray them in the Sons of Freedom image. It is a frequent annoyance to both Independent and Orthodox groups to be equated with that group. On a reversed note, it was mentioned that Doukhobors might also be accused of some discrimination toward other Canadians in terms of their stress on endogamy, use of language and perhaps in

celebrations. It must be mentioned, however, that if these practices occurred they were probably emanated from a concern for exclusivity rather than deliberate discrimination.

Doukhobor youth in this study portrayed no particular penchant for either appreciating the past in any nostalgic sense for agronomous or communal living. They take the city for granted, it is the model for functioning in today's world. Their appreciation for their past is minimal, and is captured somewhat poetically, without any sense of reminiscence. It is not a part of their lifespace, only a fragment of what they have been told, much of it second hand. In Alberta, this generation of Doukhobors is Doukhobor only by descension, not in any other way. Like other Canadians of their age, they are an emerging urban generation bent on creating an identity of their own with few strings to the past.

By comparison, it appears that some Canadian cultural groups have fared better than Doukhobors in preserving their lifestyles. The French, for example, have maintained a strong institutional identity, and the Jews have persisted in perpetuating the idea of a personal sense of identity,[9] the Doukhobor ethos has not permitted such, first because of the intent of their philosophy to avoid any semblance of institutionalization (particularly religious), and secondly because of their preference for the oral tradition. The Doukhobor slogan, "Toil and peaceful life" implies a reinforcing of their faith through daily living, not through rituals or evangelism. In this regard their ethnocentrism has worked against them in that they have been unable to keep their children in the faith, at least in Alberta. Some of the young people interviewed have joined mainline church denominations

while others claim no attachment to any religious body. Where interviews about Doukhobor history and culture may take hours with those over 60 years of age, the conversation is soon ended with those under thirty. Beyond knowing about the pacifist stance of their ancestors, they adhere to no particular Doukhobor beliefs. When Doukhobor festivities or observances have been attended by the younger group they have done so at the insistence of the older people or merely in order to please them. They do not consider their Russian background to be a particular asset nor a hindrance, but then they know little of its true essence since they have never really been a part of that community. In terms of university involvement, they attend for the same reasons as any other Canadian young person — and they have the same concept regarding academic interests in Doukhobor culture, namely that their heritage is a logical area of study for social historians to pursue.

ANALYSIS

Several decades ago theologian Rudolph Bultmann stunned the theological world by suggesting that if Christianity was to have relevance for the next generation it would have to be demythologized, that is, it would have to be clothed in a new cultural garb, one understandable by the present generation. The same concept has sometimes been suggested by members of ethnic groups who bemoan the passing of their cultural identity through intermarriage, loss of native language or through union with Canadian mainline religious bodies. Whether the emergence of a new mythology or social goal will occur soon enough and rally sufficient numbers remains to be seen. If this

were to happen it would need to resemble the mainstream urban social structure sufficiently to attract already assimilated Doukhobor youth in Canada, and as such would probably stand a good chance of being endorsed as part of a national dream instead of a uniquely ethnic outlook. To resurrect Doukhobor traditions to the extent of becoming a workable reality with clear earmarkings of earlier beliefs and practices would therefore appear to be an impossibility. And that undertaking, if it is to have any hope at all of being more than a representation, would have to occur in British Columbia where all renaissance-oriented Doukhobor eyes are currently focused.[10]

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[8]Ibid., 70.

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[10]I am grateful to the Office of the Secretary of State for funding that made this project possible. The University of Calgary Grants Committee also provided funds for the typing of transcripts and these are acknowledged with thanks.

APPENDIX A

Brief Depicture of Responses

	Area of Questioning	Older Group	Middle Group	Younger Group
A.	AWARENESS OF CULTURE: CULTURAL PERSISTENCE			
1.	What aspects of Doukhobor cultures remain?	pacifism, strong faith, spiritual values	pacifism, funerals, language	very little some funerals
2.	What is the best cultural form?	spiritually communal	fully integrated	assimilation
3.	Doukhobor world-view	religious/prayer	global	toward the past
B.	LANGUAGE, RELIGION			
4.	Should Russian be retained?	yes, but hard to do	yes, but we did not	yes, same as any other language
5.	Should Doukhobors master English?	yes	yes, anyone should	definitely
6.	Most predominant religious trait	prayer, funerals pacifism vegetarianism	pacifism funerals	very little
7.	Predominant belief/ trait remaining?	peace	funerals	funerals
C.	EDUCATION, SCHOOLING			
8.	Do children learn the traditions, etc?	some	few	none
9.	How much schooling is needed?	children tend to need more nowadays	all you can get for your vocation	all you can get for functioning in today's world
10.	What kind of schooling?	public, and some Russian	public	public
11.	What image for youth?	live in both worlds	function in both worlds	function in today's world

		and culture	and culture	studies
13.	Future research directions	have symposium teach non-violence	establish chair of studies	promote ethnic studies
D.	ASSIMILATION THREAT			
14.	Which Canadian customs should be adopted	nothing, or try to avoid violence	we do so unconsciously	all of it
15.	Which Doukhobor customs should be adopted by Canadians?	peace and spiritual values	pacifism hospitality	pacifism brotherly love
16.	How long for assimilation to be completed	it will never happen	one to two generations	has already occurred
17.	What are today's challenges?	retaining youth in culture	hard to preserve culture	retain history, language
E.	CONFRONTING ISSUES			
18.	Is there discrimination?	once there was some	not much today	none
19.	Do Doukhobors discriminate?	endogamy, perhaps out of preference	probably due to clannish	perhaps some
20.	References for interviews?	Go to B.C. relatives/ friends	Go to headquarters U.S.C.C. (B.C.)	ask our grandparents

APPENDIX B

DOUKHOBORS IN ALBERTA

The Interview Schedule

John W. Friesen
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

1. To what extent does Doukhobor culture exist today in Alberta? Which features of the old traditions, ideas and customs are still being retained by the people?

    a. ideas or important rules
    b. language
    c. stories, beliefs
    d. rituals, festivals
    e. other, such as?

2. In what ways are Doukhobor matters controlled today compared with the traditional communal preferences? In what ways should they be handled? Are there ways in which they can be improved?

    a. a communal system of living
    b. independent style but with respect for Canadian ways
    c. independently with a minimal involvement with Canadian society
    d. as fully integrated as any other people
    e. other

3. What would you say is the Doukhobor "world-view"? In other words, what does a Doukhobor think of the world in general? What is his/her outlook on life?

    a. How does he think matters between Doukhobors should be handled?
    b. What does he think about relations between Doukhobors and non-Doukhobors?
    c. What is his/her concept of the wider world, i.e., provincial matters, Canadian or international affairs?

4. When the Doukhobors immigrated to Canada around 1899 they had an independent religion of their own. To what extent has this system of belief persisted?

    a. What features of the Doukhobor belief system would you like to see preserved?
    b. What features of other Canadian religions or belief systems do you think have benefitted Doukhobor people?
    c. Have there been any problems of accommodation in this area? If so, can you provide any examples?

5. Do Doukhobor children learn the beliefs of the Doukhobor people well? Who assumes the basic responsibility for teaching them.

6. Describe a particular Doukhobor belief or custom that is still being practiced and valued among Doukhobors in Alberta today.

7. How much and what kinds of schooling do you believe the average Doukhobor child needs today? Does he need:

    a. business education (enough to learn accounting procedures in order to run his own business)?
    b. professional education, e.g. teacher, lawyer, doctor
    c. a "read and write" education - enough to be able to handle relationships with the non-Doukhobor world

8. How do you think Doukhobor children should be educated and how far?

    a. in private schools, both elementary and high school
    b. in private schools, only elementary
    c. in private schools for elementary training and public high schools
    d. totally public education
    e. avoid education altogether

9. How do Doukhobor parents want their children to see themselves?

    a. as being Doukhobor
    b. being Canadian
    c. have the ability to function in both worlds
    d. other

10. Do you believe the Russian language should be preserved?

    a. to what extent is it being transmitted?
    b. how is it being transmitted?
    c. how could it be transmitted (taught in home, in school, etc.)

11. Do you think all Doukhobor people should master English?

    a. how much knowledge of the English language should Doukhobor children know today?
    b. will this hinder their learning of the Russian language?

12. What aspects of Canadian society generally would you like to see adopted by Doukhobors?

13. What aspects of the Doukhobor way of life could profitably be adopted by Canadians?

    a. in your estimation, how could this be accomplished?

14. If the Canadian way of living generally appealed to the Doukhobor (to you), how long would it take for all Doukhobors to become assimilated into the Canadian mainstream of society?

    a. over two generations?
    b. one generation?
    c. ten to twenty-five years?
    d. less than ten years?
    e. other?

15. Is discrimination of Doukhobors by non-Doukhobors practised in Alberta? In what ways?

    a. social discrimination, i.e. housing, lodging, etc?
    b. economic discrimination, jobs, etc?
    c. religious?
    d. other?

16. Does the Doukhobor discriminate against the non-Doukhobor? In what ways?

17. What are some specific challenges (or problem areas) of Doukhobor people today?

    a. acculturation?
    b. school problems?
    c. legal-governmental problems?
    d. higher education?
    e. seeking to restore communal living?
    f. internal relations?
    g. retaining children in the belief system?
    h. other?

18. What might be the role of the university in aiding Doukhobors to realize their goals?

19. Would you have any suggestions about this research in terms of directions or areas we might probe?

20. Can you name other interested people, either Doukhobor or non-Doukhobor who might like to discuss Doukhobor culture with us?

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